

23-0123 Legal Services Reorganization (appears in the Human Resources/Information Technology Committee agenda as an action item)

Finance Committee on 2023-02-06 530 PM

Mon, Feb 06, 2023 5:30PM

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 13:14

Moving on to information items. We could just real quick visit on 23-0123 Legal Services reorganization which will appear in the Human Resources IT committee agenda as an action item. Seems pretty straightforward. But Attorney Behrens just want to real quick.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 13:40

Thank you. Hopefully the memo was clear and concise. This is something that has piqued my interest shortly after I took office and really had an opportunity to start working closely with the clerk's office to see what it is they all do. And with our department being called legal services, it didn't seem to properly acknowledge a division of our office that does a lot of work for the city. So that was part of the driver in it.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 14:17

As part of this reorganization, also, I think properly, which may come as a surprise to some of you, but the City Clerk's position has not been recognized at the deputy director level. And then when I look back at budget Saturdays and the clerk is presenting budget, the budget, the clerk develops the portion of that budget, administers that, much like other deputy directors do and really oversees that department plus so much more that you're all aware of. It seemed like it was long overdue to make the adjustments to recognize that and then through that process, we just had an opportunity to also review the position that's functioning currently as the—what's known as the deputy clerk but is taking more of a role of guiding others in the office to change that to a lead position. And then in talking with the clerk, recognize that we really need to bring back the position of an elections clerk.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 15:26

Again, as everybody's aware, elections work has become much more involved and intense and much of that position's time is dedicated year round to preparing for or preparing after elections. And it will continue to still provide some support within the office also. So organizationally, that position will report directly to the clerk, just given the nature of the work that it's done. On the attorney side of things that are no changes, so we'll keep that part of it simple. But as you mentioned, it'll go to HR IT on Wednesday night for approval, and we're hoping that it'll get the support.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 16:14

All right.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 16:15

Thanks.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 16:15

Does anyone have any questions or comments? Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:20

I'd just like to thank the attorney and for the work in doing that. I think it's long overdue to recognize the contribution of some of these positions. And as chair of the HR IT committee, you'll have my support on Wednesday. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 16:39

Anyone else? I have one question. It might be a little bit on the edge of this topic. But I noticed in the memo, it mentioned that the city clerk used to be an elected position, but now is a hired position. The city attorney is an elected position, but I know one of our neighboring communities has recently made the change. Has there been any discussion? And my wondering behind this is that I don't remember us ever really having a competitive race for things like this. And it just—it feels more like as a job that you want to hire a person, not necessarily, you know—I mean, because really, it's the only department where the head is elected. Every other department we hired the heads.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 17:16

There's there's some merit in having—and there are a couple of other cities that still have an elected city attorney. One of the benefits of that is the independence that that offers to the position. There are times where it's not very comfortable, that you have to deliver news to the Council that they don't particularly want to hear or like. But legally, it's it's the opinion you have to give and having a bit of insulation that way is helpful if it's needed.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 17:55

The other benefit it provides is some insulation from the mayor. And again, in a difficult situation the city attorney has that insulation from any action of the mayor, also. So yeah, there's—you can look at both sides, but Appleton has had an elected city attorney for a long, long time and obviously, that's the prerogative of the Council to review at any point in time.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 18:37

Thanks for indulging me.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 18:38

Sure.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 18:39

Anyone else?

Attorney Christopher Behrens 18:40

And I could have said that's outside of the scope of this and not answered but. **[Note: he said this in a lighthearted way.]**

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 18:46

I figured it was kind of on the right on the border there. So thank you. Last check anyone else?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 18:52

Move for adjournment.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 18:53

All right.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 18:55
Second.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 18:55

All those in favor? Aye. All right, we have a motion and a second. We're adjourned. Thank you, everyone. Have a good night.